From: E Manes
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/23/02 9:11pm
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

To whom it may concern,

I'm writing to you as I was informed that I could express my feelings about the Microsoft (MS) anti-trust suit. I have been a user of MS products all of my computing life which means since 1992. I have seen the development of Windows 2, Windows 3.0, Windows 3.1, Windows 3.11, Windows 95, Windows 95 SR-2, Windows 98, Windows 98 SR-1, Windows 98 Second Edition, Windows Millenium, Windows 2000, and now Windows XP. There is one common theme that I have seen over the many years of development.

Microsoft will incorporate the features of a popularly used **existing** product into their **future** operating system. I have seen this behavior occurring increasingly more now than in previous years and it is incredibly obvious that those that founded the technologies are left to struggle in a hostile environment. I will list examples:

Netscape: Enough said !! Actually, no it wasn't. MS developed a decent browser in Internet Explorer (IE) when they adhered to the world wide web consortium's outlines. They packed IE with their OS and people no longer needed to download Netscape (an inconvenience but proper since they were the ones that fathered the idea and developed it). It wasn't until they integrated it with their OS and then lied about the OS's dependence that it became obvious that there was something wrong about the way that they did business. They then created software packages that created webpages in such a manner that they would not be viewed properly to those using Netscape so people are forced into using IE. The VERY SAD part with all this is that Netscape continues to develop with the ideals of the world wide web consortium ideals and have lost any chance of making a comeback. They continue to develop a software package that adhere's stictly to the publicly available consortium outlines. Their web-page creation program continues to create web pages that can be read and interpreted properly by ANY browser unlike Microsoft Frontpage.

MSN Messenger: AOL created a great program that allowed people to communicate with each other over the internet. Microsoft decided to create their own version that conflicted with AOL buddies. This left people in either camp stranded. It got to the point where they were hacking each others code to enable functionality. Microsoft then added this software to Windows Millenium as an option where the user could disable it easily enough. Windows XP throws MSN Messenger in your face every chance it gets and won't stop nagging no matter how many times it is told to buzz off. I'm not sympathetic to either of the software packages but I have noticed the frustrations of users of either software package. It is easy enough to download AOL IM and install it but I'm sure that there will be conflicts with MSN Messenger while it continues to pop up uninvited. This will leave people with a frustrated view of AOL's IM and I'm sure over time they will switch to MSN Messenger. I strongly believe that this is NOT a necessity of the OS and should be left out. The user should be allowed to install the software of their choice.

ZIP Utility: Microsoft has now (as of Windows XP) included a zipping utility as part of their OS. In the past users would typically download a shareware software package to perform these same operations. This will limit the number of people that download a developed piece of software. It is unfortunate that Microsoft is **allowed** to incorporate whatever piece of software that they would like and package it with their OS. I feel for these software developers that poured countless hours of programming time into their software just to see the technology incorporated into MS's OS. This does not create a competitive environment and limits the creativity of programmers.

Media Player: Real Player was the dominant player in streaming media and really developed this area. Microsoft then created their version of streaming video and at first it would not play Real media streams. I'm not so sure these days but you can bet that if it does now that it will be dropped later once MS takes a majority share of the market. There was a point where Real Audio was the definitive answer to video streaming and no longer is. This is very similar to what happened to Netscape.

MS is currently up to their old tricks with MP3 files. MP3 files have been popularly used for about 7 years and MS saw this and created their own compression algorithm and I'll argue that although their compression size IS smaller, the quality is not their. Anyhow, MS then decided that their most recent Media Player would

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NOT play or create MP3s. They claimed that this was due to legal concerns but I don't believe it for a minute as there is technology available to prevent this from occurring. Fortunately, the market demanded that they incorporate MP3s and so they did BUT the algorithm is crippled and thus creates very poor MP3 files. This will force people to add another piece of software to their computer OR choose the simpler route which is just use MS's WMA format.

Video Editing: Since video editing has become so popular, MS has incorporated a video editing package into their software suite when there are a variety of inexpensive suites that come with any video recorder purchased. I can't see a reason why MS has to include their own as a default. Their editor is basic and there is still currently reason to purchase a professional suite but it will only be a matter of time until MS improves their offering resulting in another market of software disappearing. It already eclipses the market for those that created an entry level package, which were included with the video recorders. That market has all but disappeared.

CD-Burning: Microsoft has included with Windows XP their own CD burning software algorithm. Again, there are 4 big companies that provide this availability at a nominal cost but most users won't bother due to convenience and so these companies will eventually reduce in number.

Interesting Note: Microsoft sells their Office Suite for over $450 which includes MS Word, MS Excel, MS Access, MS Outlook Express, MS Powerpoint. They also sell a suite to the home user for $100 that includes MS Word, a watered down version of MS Excel, a watered down version of MS Access, Microsoft Money, Microsoft Picture it Publishing, Microsoft Encarta, and Microsoft Trips & Streets. The home version of the suite is valued well over $350 if purchased separately. Why do you think that this might be? This gives the home user no reason to investigate a financial management package, a photo-editing package, an encyclopedia package, or a trip planning package. This is further proof of their improper business tactics. They are selling the software at a sub-market prices to increase market share. This will get people to continue purchasing MS software as they will run into file compatibility problems if they try to use another package.

The file compatibility problems are due to the fact that MS does not release the details of how their software works to the programming community. They have the consumer any which way that you look at it.

I could could continue to list other occurrences but I must get back to my studies. I really hope that someone looks at this note and reads it in it's entirety.

Summary: Microsoft's strategy seems to be that they will incorporate (copy) a technology to the point where users are comfortable with using it but then they make it proprietary such that you are forced to continue using only their package. I have seen this with their media player, zipping utility, Internet Explorer, Outlook Express, MSN Messenger. I find it incredibly hard to believe that these smaller software companies manage to adhere to some standard and that their files are properly read and used by other problems but that MS cannot. I believe that this is intentional as I have seen it work flawlessly with other software packages. Microsoft claims that they are doing this to give the user a greater out-of-box experience. Don't believe it !! Nine times out of ten their technology is subpar but people use it because it is convenient.
    My solution would be to either,
1) Force MS to remove all of their incorporated programs and make them available for installing ALONG with the available packages. Let the user choose which software package they prefer. It's difficult to fathom that this would be more costly to MS than their current package. I also believe that this should be overshadowed by a 3rd party committee and that MS should be fined grossly for each violation of the INTENTION of the organization.

2) Release their source code to the programming community so that they have a chance to promote their products without already being crippled by the compatibility issues due to the MS closed-nature of their code.

MTC-00019568_0003

I would expect that about 85% of users are concerned about file compatibility when considering an alternative software package.

For the life of me, I can't possibly believe that those that are responsible for coming to a decision on this matter could see it any other way. Microsoft has and continues (more than ever now) to stifle creativity and development of programs with their prominence. As a user of their products for many years I can recognize the trend. I'm not sure that those involved in the case have the same lengthy experience with MS software or have been able to work with the MS OS offerings through the years, such as I have.

Microsoft is doing the OPPOSITE of reducing their shady business practices. I see a marked increase in their Windows XP and this is WITH an anti-trust trial under way.

Warning: MS has been known to unethically influence polls and e-mails by creating a software program that votes FOR MS so please examine your PRO MS e-mails along with your ANTI MS e-mails to ensure reliability.

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